(a) whether Government have decided to launch a pilot project to lay a cable network for facilitation of doordarshan viewers n North-Eastem States of the country.

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith likely expenditure on the project; and

(c) by when work on the pilot project is likely to be taken up?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ): (a) to (c) The Government has approved, in principle, the implementation of a special package of schemes for improvement of doordarshan and AIR services in the North-East Region (including Sikkim), to be implemented in the 10th Five Year Plan. The size and nature of the schemes will depend upon the approval by the Expenditure Finance Committee and advance action will start during the current financial year.

Clearance of Harmonium by Doordarshan

839. DR. RAJA RAMANNA: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that Harmonium has been cleared for performance by All India Radio but it has not been cleared by Doordarshan;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether Government propose to remove this discrimination; and

(d) if so, by when?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ): (a) to (d) Prasar Bharati has complete independence in programme matters and the Government does not interefere in them. Programme decisions are taken by AIR and DD, separately and independently. Doordarshan has informed that in all the programmes recorded/ telecast, whether instrumental or vocal, Hindustani or Camatic, Harmonium is used as an accompanying instrument.

Leasing of towers by Air to FM Operators

840. SHRI RUMANDALA RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to allow the All India Radio to lease out its towers to private FM operators;

(b) if so, whether this decision will help the private sector to speed up the start of FM channels in various cities.

(c) the main decisions taken in this regard;

(d) whether the officials of the AIR with the private FM operations had met to study the technical and financial feasibility of this scheme;

(e) if so, by when the final decision in this regard is likely to be taken; and

(f) to what extent it has been beneficial to the country?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ): (a) to (d) Prasar Bharati has decided to permit the private FM operators to share its common infrastructural facilities, including towers, subject to technical feasibility and on payment of licence fee. Each request is considered from the point of view of its technical feasibility after taking into account Prasar Bharati's own requirement and the licence fee is fixed on the basis of the investments and operational cost of these facilities Detailed terms and conditions vary from place to place de"pending upon the requirement of private operator, nature of infrastructural facilities and the number of operators.

(e) Does not arise.

(f) Speedy operationalisation of private FM Stations will help provide high quality multi-channel entertainment. Other benefits would include revenue from licence fee increased employment and boost to related manufacturing industries due to increased demand for FM radio and related accessories. Sharing of Prasar Bharati's towers will ensure optimal utilisation of these assets.

Inquiry into Irregularities Committed by Companies

† 841. SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:
SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH LALAN:

Will the Minister of LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) Whether it is fact that the Department of Company Affairs is inquiring into the irregularities committed by a number of companies registered in the country;

(b) If so, the number of abovesaid companies involved in the inquiry as on September 2001; and

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.